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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, July 10, 1935.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Canning Queries." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,
U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Among the questions from home canners that come to the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington, D. C., are a few that come very often -- and from all parts of the country.

For example, many women inquire about canning fruit without sugar. "Can you put up fruits without sugar?" they ask. And, "Will canned fruit keep with no sugar?" and "What methods do you use in putting fruit up this way?" They also want to know whether you can use other sweetenings beside sugar in canning fruit.

These are the questions up for answer this morning. I'll tell you just how the canning people answer them. And if you aren't canning this summer yourself -- well, at least you'll have the best and latest advice I can get on the subject to pass along to your neighbor.

The canning people say, "Yes, indeed, you can put up fruits without sugar." They say if you can the fruit properly -- use tight sterilized containers and process according to the rules and regulations and so on, your product will keep from spoilage just as well without added sweetening. You just take your choice about adding sugar or not adding it. Many home canners put up fruits with no sweetening for pies and for diabetic diets.

You don't have to worry about spoilage when canning fruits this way, but the product won't be exactly the same as the sweetened product in appearance, or in taste, or in texture. You see, sugar helps hold the shape of canned fruit. Without it your fruit will be softer, somewhat broken down. Again, fruit preserved with no sugar won't have the same color. Sugar helps hold color as well as shape. To save all the color you can, remember to store your glass jars in a dark, cool place.

Now about directions for putting up fruit when you aren't using sugar. First, the juicy fruits like berries, cherries, currants and plums. These have so much good juice of their own that you never need to use water in canning them. You use the riper fruits in the batch to make the juice. To extract juice, you crush the fruit, heat it and strain it. Then the remaining fruit, you can pack into containers without preheating, pour the boiling juice over them so they're entirely covered, partially seal the containers, and process as you usually do. If you're using tin cans, first exhaust the cans of fruit and then seal and process them. That's one good method of canning juicy fruit. But some people prefer to give the fruit a short precooking -- about 2 to 4 minutes of simmering -- and then pour into containers at once and seal and process.

If you want to put up any of the less juicy fruits, you will need to add some water. Of course, you'll want to preserve as much of the natural fruit flavors as possible by adding only the minimum of water. Apples, peaches, pears and so on go under the head of "less juicy fruits."

Suppose now that you want to put up some peaches this summer with no sugar. You can do it by one of two methods. You can pack the peaches without precooking and cover them with boiling hot water. Or you can precook the fruit by simmering in water a few minutes and then pack hot and process.

As for apples and pears -- but I'm getting ahead of the season. This is too early to begin talking about apples and pears, isn't it? If you're interested, though, it's not too early to write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., and ask for a copy of the bulletin called "Canning Fruits and Vegetables at Home." It's free as long as the supply lasts. And it gives all the details that we haven't been able to go into today.

Now for that second question: "Can you put up fruit with some other sweetening than sugar -- honey, for example, or sirup?"

The canning people say "Yes" again. They say you can use honey or maple sirup or other similar sweetenings either for part of the sugar that the recipe calls for, or for all of the sugar. But here's a point worth noting. When these sweets have a decided flavor of their own, as does honey or maple sirup, you'll have better results if you use half sugar at least. Otherwise you may submerge the natural delicate flavor of the fruit.

Here's still another frequent canning query. A listener writes that she has no pressure canner. She wonders if she would be safe in putting up some nice garden beans by processing in boiling water instead of under steam pressure.

This time the answer is: "No" -- a very firm and emphatic "No." The canning people believe that all non-acid foods need processing under pressure for safety. They hold to this rule as if it were one of the laws of the Medes and the Persians. And with good reason. They know of far too much spoilage and waste of canned food and sometimes of illness, as a result of improper canning. They say that fruits, which are acid, and tomatoes, also acid, will can safely at boiling temperature. But non-acid vegetables are another matter. To be sure of killing spoilage organisms in peas or beans or corn or asparagus or any other non-acid vegetable, you need a temperature higher than boiling. And you can only get that under pressure.

So now, if you don't own a pressure canner yourself, can't you borrow one to put up those nice beans? If you can't borrow one, how about joining some neighborhood group of canners where you can use a pressure canner on a cooperative basis? Better not ever put up any vegetables besides tomatoes unless you have the equipment to do the correct sort of processing.

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